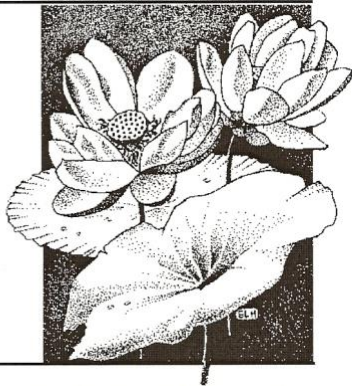


Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



DECEMBER 2021



10 Fascinating Facts About Wild Turkeys

By Adam Hunter (NCC)*

Here are 10 facts about wild turkeys, a species that has been documented on Nature Conservancy of Canada properties in Ontario and Quebec:

1. Male wild turkeys are called “toms,” while females are called “hens.”
2. At the start of spring, male wild turkeys get together in clearings to perform courtship displays. They puff up their feathers, lower their wings, fan out their tails and slowly strut, while making their famous gobble sounds.
3. Believe it or not, wild turkeys can fly. At nighttime, they fly up into trees to roost.
4. Wild turkeys were extirpated (locally extinct) from Ontario as a result of habitat loss and over-hunting. Reintroduction efforts began in 1984. Turkeys are now a common sight in southern Ontario and Quebec, and they are continuing to expand their range.
5. An adult turkey can have more than 6,000 feathers.
6. The historic range of wild turkeys in Canada was probably limited to southern Ontario and Quebec. Today, scattered populations can also be found in western Canada as a result of introductions.
7. Wild turkeys mostly inhabit forests but often wander into open fields and grasslands to feed.



Wild turkey (Photo by D.P. Lawrence CC-BY-NC)

8. Wild turkeys are not fussy eaters. They feed on hickory nuts, beech nuts, acorns, fruit, snails, worms and amphibians.
9. Wild turkeys can run at speeds of up to 19 kilometres per hour.
10. Certain characteristics of wild turkey droppings, such as their shape and size, reveal the turkey's gender and age. Female droppings are spiral shaped, while male droppings are J-shaped. The larger the diameter, the older the bird.

* Adam Hunter became part of the Nature Conservancy of Canada's team in October 2016. From a young age, he has been fascinated by wildlife and animal behaviour.



Wild Turkeys Near Nanticoke
(Photo by Len Grincevicius)

ALONG THE FOREST FLOOR (Backus Woods)

Photos by Member, Jeff Hiebert



American Toad



Orange Mycena Mushroom



Snail



Big Sand Tiger Beetle



Orange Chantrelle Mushroom



Wood Frog

How Do Birds Survive a Snowstorm?

Article from National Audubon Society

With winter approaching, many people are bracing for freezing temps and potential blizzards that can keep them indoors for days. But how do birds survive those same storms? The answer is threefold: Location, preparation, and adaptation.

Shelter in Place

When bad weather hits, birds generally seek shelter in microhabitats, such as inside a thick hedge, or on the downwind side of a tree—in this case, being petite has its advantages. Hunkering down in these spots can protect them from wind, rain, and even cold (it's warmer closer to the ground). Birds that nest in cavities, including woodpeckers, bluebirds, and chickadees, can also hide out in their tree holes.

"I don't know to what extent the birds actively pause and say, 'it feels a couple of degrees warmer here'," says Audubon's field editor Kenn Kaufman, "but whether it's instinctive or a conscious choice, they are definitely making moves to be in sheltered spots."



House Finch

Photo by Len Grincevicius

Some birds will even wander several miles looking for adequate shelter and reliable food sources. Dense evergreens, spruces, or junipers provide better cover than the bare branches of a deciduous tree in winter.

This helps keep the ground underneath pines snow-free, and gives birds a place to forage for food, too.

Beef Up in Advance

Fat birds have a better chance of surviving a storm. When birds sense changes in air pressure (a sign of brewing bad weather), they tend to forage more, or flock to feeders, says Kaufman. When the first significant snowstorm hit Ohio this month, the number of American Tree Sparrows in Kaufman's yard soared from one lone bird to over 70 crowding around a feeder.

"You can see they are just out there feverishly stuffing their faces," he says. "They can survive really cold temperatures as long as they get enough to eat."

Evolution's Got Their Backs

Birds have also evolved to withstand bad weather. Their lanky legs and little feet have what are called counter-current circulation. Birds have cold blood in their feet, which means very little heat is lost when they are standing on cold ground.

"The counter-current circulation is why you can see a bunch of Herring Gulls standing on the ice," says Kaufman. "They aren't jumping around and shivering because they are well adapted to that."

Their feathers are the perfect insulation—they are basically natural down jackets. The down feathers underneath a bird's contour feathers trap air, holding in the warmth from its body and preventing cold air from reaching its skin. Birds that winter in cold climates also don a thicker plumage in the winter, which they then molt in the fall and spring.

So, while we cozy up with our hot chocolates this weekend, there's no need to worry about the birds—they are well-equipped to survive the ensuing tempest.

University of Guelph Bus Shelters Get Bird-Friendly Upgrade

Bus shelters at the University of Guelph have received a bird-safe makeover, becoming the first of what a local conservation group hopes will be many fowl-friendly upgrades on campus.

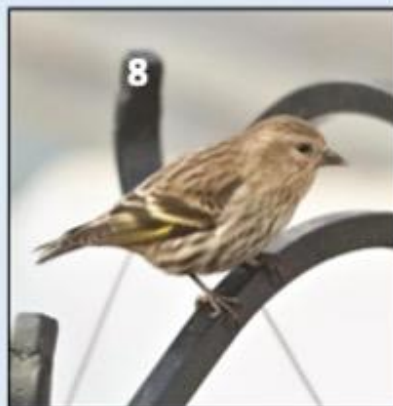
The new evenly spaced-white dots on the shelter windows are designed to make the glass visible to birds and prevent potentially fatal collisions.

See the rest of the story [here](#).



Winter Birds Photo Quiz

Answers on Page 6



Climate Change and Human Pressure Mean Migration May Be 'No Longer Worth It,' Say Researchers

Animals that migrate north to breed are being put at risk by ongoing climate change and increasing human pressure, losing earlier advantages for migration, declining in numbers and faring much worse than their resident counterparts, according to some scientists. To learn more about this possibility, go [here](#).

How Do Birds Stay Snug During the Winter?

When winter cold sets in, birds face two daily challenges: don't freeze, and don't starve. How do they do it? Different birds use different strategies—from freeze-proof toes, to snow dens, to using each other as a heat source. To learn more, go [here](#).



Photo by Larry Monczka

Bird Song Hero

The free bird song learning game! Become a Bird Song Hero by training your brain to visualize, appreciate, and recognize bird songs. For learners ages 6 and up from the Bird Academy Play Lab. Go [here](#).

Free Learning Game



Status Of American Chestnut

Today, it can be difficult to find a healthy American chestnut. A fungal pathogen on trees imported from Japan and China wiped the species out in less than 40 years. That loss is considered to be the greatest ecological disaster to ever strike the world's forests.

To find out more about this tree, go [here](#).

To learn more about the Canadian Sweet Chestnut Council, go [here](#).

The latest newsletter is [here](#).



Thank You!

From Norfolk Field Naturalists to
Will & Morgan Partridge
Guardian Computing
For hosting our website

Conserving Carolinian Reptiles — Long Point Provincial Park Road Survey

By Member, Jan Grincevicius

The Long Point Basin Land Trust has conducted this survey for several years. Twice over the Thanksgiving weekend, Len and I walked along the road in the LPPP where there is a barrier on each side of the road in an area more likely to attract reptiles. The barriers have been in place for several years to prevent reptiles from venturing onto the road and being killed by vehicular traffic. We concentrated on recording the snakes we found on the road side of the barrier.

When we encountered a snake, the species and general description (juvenile, adult, any injuries, etc.) is recorded. If the snake is alive and, on the road side of the fence, we moved it to the other side, out of harm's way. Although we did not find any dead snakes on the road, we would have also moved them to the other side of the barrier so they would not be counted in any other survey.

The data recorded each year is used to determine the effectiveness of installing such barriers.



**Eastern
Gartersnake**



**Melanistic
Gartersnake**



**Northern
Ribbonsnake**



**Northern
Watersnake**

Winter Birds Quiz Answers (from p.4):

1) Pine Grosbeak, 2) Red-breasted Nuthatch, 3) Evening Grosbeak, 4) Rough-legged Hawk, 5) Snow Bunting, 6) Northern Shrike, 7) Bohemian Waxing, 8) Pine Siskin, 9) Redpoll

Foster a Love for Nature in Youth

— **Justin Peter, Quest Nature**

When Justin thinks about what led him to do the work he does in the environmental field, he can't help but think of the importance of fostering a love for nature in youth.



To read the rest of Justin's story, go [here](#).

To receive selected information by email, you can sign up at ontarionature.org

Ontario Nature — Carolinian East Regional Meeting October 16, 2021 (via Zoom)

Summary

- 8 groups were represented
- Discussion included:
 - Pros and cons of holding meetings with speakers via Zoom
 - Holding events during COVID
 - Politically sensitive issues including preserving land from development
 - Using Facebook and other social media: to be a public relations tool; to encourage members and others to enjoy nature; to promote events
 - Engaging in community tree plantings
- Anne Bell (ON) gave a presentation on the Protected Places Campaign
- Lisa Richardson (ON) provided information on:
 - seven new nature reserves
 - development of the third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas
 - long term monitoring protocol for Ontario's snakes (including Norfolk County)
 - Youth Summit for Mother Earth held in September

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hoping this newsletter find you healthy and well.

The Board of Directors met in person on July 6th outside Inga's house. In addition to our normal business, we discussed the need for our club to have a formal "mission statement", and also debated whether we need a policy in place for advocacy. An initial suggestion from Inga for a mission statement was, "the study, appreciation and conservation of our natural world". As for an advocacy policy, we decided we should just address every issue as it arises rather than have a blanket policy. This allows flexibility depending on the issue that arises.

The Board met again "live" on November 30th and I challenged all the directors to think about how we address the impacts on our organization from the pandemic. Obviously, speaker sessions and our outings have been affected, but we are also seeing a precipitous reduction in membership numbers. The big question is, "So, where do we go from here?"

At the last Carolinian East virtual meeting, which Jan and I attended, the comments from our facilitator, Lisa from Ontario Nature, really stuck in my mind. She commented "We have to realize things will never go back to the old normal". I agree and I believe we need to think outside the box in regard to the future of NFN. I see The Nature of Norfolk Facebook page with 2,700 followers, all the great environmental organizations and their volunteers, and all the rural landowners – all folks that love nature and I think to myself "How can we be more relevant?". The audience is certainly there. How do we engage all those nature lovers in our community? What other role(s) can NFN play?

In our next edition of *The Lotus*, we'll update you on our discussions. In the meantime, I encourage all members to give the above some thought and please feel free to contact myself or one of the other directors with your ideas and suggestions!

Yours in nature,
Bernie Solymár
President, NFN



**To All NFN
Members
and Friends:**



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR!**

Upcoming NFN Events

No events in December 2021 or January 2022.

Christmas Bird Counts

Join one of the local Christmas Bird Counts and spend the day in the field identifying and counting all the birds you see or hear. Data collected during these annual events provides vital information on the distribution of winter bird populations.

Sunday, December 19, 2021

Woodhouse Count (Norfolk County)

Contact Adam Timpf

Tuesday, December 28, 2021

Fisherville Count (Haldimand County)

Contact: Linda Thrower

Scientific Discoveries of Feeding Birds

Did you know observing birds at your feeder can lead to new scientific discoveries? Tune in to the recorded webinar [Winter Bird Feeding 101 with Project FeederWatch](#) and hear how your feeder observations can contribute to science.

What to Feed Birds

Not sure what kind of food to provide? Learn the food preferences of common North American feeder visitors with the [Common Feeder Birds interactive](#).



NFN Meetings

Norfolk Field Naturalist meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month from September to May.

Meetings take place at the **Vittoria Community Centre, 35 Oakes Blvd., Vittoria**. The meetings are free and visitors are always welcome. Doors open at 7:15 pm, programs begin at 7:30 pm.

**IN-PERSON MEETINGS
POSTPONED UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE
MEETINGS ARE HELD ON
ZOOM**

NFN Mailing Address

**Norfolk Field Naturalists
PO Box 995, Simcoe, ON
N3Y 5B3**

Next Lotus Issue:

February 2022

Input deadline:

Friday, January 14, 2022

About the NFN

Norfolk Field Naturalists members participate in meetings and field outings, many of which are family-friendly. **Membership fees are \$20 Individual and \$30 Family.**

Donations are eligible for income tax credits. Charitable registration # 11905869RR00001

Guest speakers present programs on interesting and relevant natural history and conservation topics. Club members receive the Lotus newsletter with articles on local natural history and club activities. Copies of the Lotus are available at meetings, by mail or by email and posted on the NFN web site. Articles published in the Lotus reflect the views and opinions of the authors, but not necessarily those of the NFN.

www.norfolkfieldnaturalists.org

2021 - 2022 NFN Executive with Contact and Project Information

Email: info@norfolkfieldnaturalists.org

President	Bernie Solymár
Vice-President	Peter Carson
Sanctuary	Peter Carson
Past President	Inga Hinnerichsen
Treasurer	Peter Vaughan
Secretary	vacant
Director/Membership	Jan Grincevicius
Director Speaker Program and Field Events	Len Grincevicius
Director Publicity	vacant
Director Environment	Cindy Presant
Director-at-large	Judy Boone
Director-at-large	Bernd Mueller
Director-at-large	Madaline Wilson
Lotus Editor (appointed)	Jan Grincevicius
Website Coordinator (appointed)	Lisa Timpf
Butterfly Count (appointed)	Adam Timpf
Christmas Bird Counts (appointed)	Adam Timpf - Woodhouse Count
	Linda Thrower - Fisherville Count
Honorary President	George Pond
Honorary Directors	Anne and Dolf Wynia